LEE SINGS THE JAZZ

By ME

LEE SINGS THE JAZZ

Again, by ME , suckers

You remember what I said in the first book.

The one about Lee.

The one you maybe scoffed at, rolled your eyes over, called “just a dog book.”

Yeah, that one.

I said:

> If you don’t like it—
> if you think it’s silly, sentimental, “just a dog”—
> then **fuck off.**
> Get the fuck out of my life.
> And when you get there?
> **Fuck off some more.**
> Take a left at **Piss Off**, drive straight through **Get Bent**,
> and park your sorry ass in **Fuckonia**, population: you.

Well guess what?

It's worse now. For you.

Because Lee sings THE JAZZ now.
Not jazz. Not "jazzy."
THE. FUCKING. JAZZ.
Capital letters, no apologies.

He swings harder than your stepdad's second divorce.
He taps like he's trying to wake God.
He croons like he's coming for Sinatra's bones.

So if you had a problem before—
If you can't handle a dog,
can't handle joy,
can't handle Jazz,
can't handle anything that doesn't come prepackaged in irony and dead-eyed detachment—

Then keep fucking off further.
Keep going.
Keep fucking until you're halfway down the tracks,

dead center under the full weight of the **A-Train**, and get splattered in 4/4 time.

This book isn't for you.
This book doesn't want you.
This book *rejects your entire existence*.

It's for the freaks, the obsessives, the ones who still get goosebumps from a muted trumpet and lose their minds when a dog looks them in the eye like they understand *everything*.

So yeah.
We're back.
And if you're still here?

You'd better fucking swing.

(Here just starts a glorious jazz concert.)

A brush whispers across the snare. A stand-up bass begins prowling around the lower octaves like it knows secrets it shouldn't. The piano—an old, arrogant Steinway—cracks its knuckles in arpeggios. And a muted trumpet moans, not sadly, but the way an old lover might at the memory of skin.

Lights dim. Then—spotlight.

Now.

Me (from behind the curtain, holding 15kg of skeptical mutt):
I can't sing. But Lee can.
So, when the invitation came… guess who got shoved out on stage with no rehearsal?

Lee (wiggling indignantly as he's gently *yeeted* into the light):
Papa, *what is with all the pushing?*

Me:
You like Irving Berlin, don't you?

Lee (squinting, suspicious):
I *adore* Irving Berlin, but—

Quartet: belts the intro of "I Love a Piano."
(Brass blares. Cymbals sizzle. Keys glisten like sex in the moonlight.)

Lee (turning his head slowly, deadpan):
I see what you did here.

(Then. Silence. Breath.)

Lee (tail straight, chin lifted, microphone lowered to snout-height):

🎶 *I know a fine way to treat a Steinway*
I love to run my fingers o'er the keys, the ivories

(audible gasp from Table 4)

And with the pedal I love to meddle
When Padarewski comes this way
I'm so delighted if I'm invited
To hear that long-haired genius play

(his voice—silky as melted vinyl. His diction—
divine. His vibrato—dogged.)

So you can keep your fiddle and your bow
Give me a P-I-A-N-O, oh, oh
I love to stop right beside an upright
Or a high-toned Baby Grand

By the final "Baby Grand," napkins are waved overhead.
Someone's weeping into a crème brûlée.

The ghost of Ella Fitzgerald is standing in the back, nodding slow.

Me (now dragged onstage, reluctantly):
How did you even *know* all the lyrics?

Lee (winking):
Papa… I've been waiting my whole life for this cue.

Curtain closes.
Encore demanded.
Lee bows. Farts slightly. Receives standing ovation anyway.

🎹🐾
Jazz never sounded so… furry.

(Curtain swishes open again. Lights flare. The quartet is already vamping, smirking like they knew this would happen. A brushed hi-hat flirts with time.

The bass is already halfway through a walking line like it's dragging destiny by the collar.)

Band Leader (into mic):
Ladies and gentlemen…
You begged. You howled. You whistled.
You dropped foie gras into your Negronis.
So here he is…
LEE THE CROONER.

Crowd:
Doggy! Doggy! DOGGY!

Lee (backstage, ears pinned back, voice low):
Papa…

Me (adjusting his bowtie):
Oh come on, you know them all.

Lee:
They're chanting "doggy," Papa. That's *degrading.*

Me:
Then prove them wrong. Would Tony Bennett stand down?

Lee (eyes suddenly steely, tail rigid like a sabre):
No, Papa.
He'd show 'em his *fucking heart* in San Francisco.

Me:
Atta boy.

(Lee struts out like he owns Carnegie Hall. Mic descends. Crowd hushes. Quartet modulates. The key changes. The universe shifts one semitone closer to sublimity.)

Lee (gruff, sincere, eyes closed):

🎶 *I left my heart…*
In San Francisco…
High on a hill… it calls to me… 🎶

(a woman in the front row clutches her pearls and murmurs, "Tony who?")

🎶 *To be where little cable cars··· climb halfway to the stars···* 🎶

Lee (a single paw to chest):
The morning fog... may chill the air··· I don't care···

The final note lands. Gently. Like a kiss on a gravesite.

Dead silence.

Then—thunder.

Crowd erupts. People scream. A man throws a bra. A woman throws a tuxedo.

Backstage again.

Lee (panting slightly):
Papa… I did good?

Me (hugging him, eyes wet):
You *left your pawprint* in San Francisco.

Lee:
And I peed on the backstage curtain.

Me:
That too, son. That too.

(Spotlight up. Stage haze like a halo. The quartet lays down the opening bars—slow, moody, brushed drums and soft piano chords. A minor key with a wink. A waltz that forgot it was sad. Lee stands center stage, head held high, tuxedo fur slightly rumpled, dignity at full mast.)

Quartet (soft intro):
🎶 *When yo' mama loved me…*
Every town was Paris… 🎶

Lee (voice low, tender, eyes on some invisible past):
🎶 *Every day was Sunday…*
Every month was May… 🎶

Me (offstage, whispering to myself, sweating):
Lee, maybe... this one's too much—

Lee (unbothered, commanding):
Let me *bleed*, Papa.

Audience (like a gospel choir at the gates of heaven):
🎶 *When yo' mama loved me…*
Every sound was music…
Music made of laughter…
Laughter that was bright and gay… 🎶

And then: silence.

A still, golden moment.

The kind of silence only real jazz can earn.

Then—BOOM. Ovation.
Tablecloths in the air.
Bartender fainted.
Someone proposes marriage to the dog.
Two ex-lovers re-embrace.
A pigeon is crying in the chandelier.

Backstage.

Me:
That was… that was *dangerous*, Lee.

Lee (lighting a cigarette, no thumbs, don't ask):
Papa…
I *am* dangerous.

And the quartet's already tuning up again.
Because they know what's coming next.
And so does Lee.
So do we all.

(The quartet sighs into a slow tempo. A hush falls. Even the chandeliers seem to dim in reverence. The pianist—Bib Merrill himself, grizzled, bitter, once kicked out of the Blue Note for throwing a trumpet at a waiter—gently lays down the intro, one hand over his heart. The brushes whisper. The bass weeps.)

Me (nervous, whispering):
Lee… Bib Merrill isn't *exactly* the Great American Songbook…

Lee (adjusting his bowtie, haloed by spotlight):
Leave it to me, Papa.

(He steps forward. The mic descends. The lights warm to gold. He clears his throat with the gravitas of Streisand in a thunderstorm.)

Lee (softly):
🎶 *People…*
People who need puppies…
Are the luckiest people in the world… 🎶

(You could hear a pin drop. You could hear a pin apologize for existing.)

🎶 *Puppies are very special puppies…*
They're the luckiest puppies… in the world… 🎶

(Bib Merrill openly sobs into his piano. The bass player drops his pick and says, “God forgive me, I’ve never loved like that.”)

🎶 *But first… be a person… who needs puppies…*
People who need puppies…
Are the luckiest people… in the world… 🎶

Audience:
In tears.
Mascara on tuxedos.
Grown men whispering “Mama…” into their Negronis.
An old critic faints, revived only by the scent of puppy shampoo.

Me:
Shaking.
Mama: clutching her chest.
The cat: pretending not to cry, but tail curled like a question mark.

Lee (tail wagging, mic drop):
Nailed it.

Curtain closes.
Standing ovation continues through the night,

echoes into legend.
Bib Merrill never plays again. He doesn't *have to*.

(Scene: Late night. House packed. Air thick with perfume, gin, and unresolved trauma. Bib Merrill has removed his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and lit a third cigarette using the first two. The lights dim until only Lee is visible—center stage, full spotlight, vengeance glowing softly in his eyes like embers under fur.)

Lee (tail twitching):
Papa, this one's for *that bitch* who betrayed me.

Me (already bracing):
Lee. *Language.*

Lee (matter-of-fact):
Papa, it's the *current word* for a female dog in the English language.

Me:
Still—

Lee:
That dirty bitch.

Me:
LEE!

Lee (shrugs):
She didn't shower. *Also…*
Listen to me *very carefully*.

(Lee inhales. Mic shimmers. The band leans in, ready to hurt some feelings.)

🎶 *I want to be around to pick up the pieces…*
When somebody breaks your heart…
Some somebody twice as smart as I… 🎶

Audience: silenced. Possessed. Stirred like martinis.

🎶 *A somebody who will swear to be true…*
As you used to do with me…
Who'll leave you to learn… that misery loves company… wait and see… 🎶

Me (trying to keep a lid on the emotional warfare):
Lee… still… revenge songs…

Lee (ignores me, turns to center stage, dead serious):
🎶 *I mean, I want to be around to see how he does it…*
When he breaks your heart to bits…
Let's see if the puzzle fits so fine… 🎶

🎶 *And that's when I'll discover that revenge is sweet…*
As I sit there applauding from a front-row seat…

When somebody breaks your heart…
Like you, like you broke mine… 🎶

Lee (jazz paws out, one eyebrow lifted, cheekbone catching the light just so):
Oooh *yeeeah.*

Audience:
Not breathing.
One man collapses into his crème brûlée.
Someone screams "PREACH, KING."
A woman takes off her heels and throws them on stage.
The drummer is crying.
The saxophone refuses to play again out of respect.

Me (quietly, like a man witnessing Sinatra rise from the grave):
Pure… respect.

Lee (bowing just enough to break hearts all over again):
That's *showbiz*, baby.

Bib Merrill (off-mic, sobbing):
I once *loved* a bitch too.

(Quartet: already halfway through the intro, brushing and strutting like they've just married Duke Ellington's ghost. The drummer throws in a flourish. Bib Merrill nods solemnly like he's about to witness history—or public indecency.)

Me (sprinting toward the stage, panic in my voice):
Lee—*really*? Not this one.

Lee (adjusting mic, looking me dead in the soul):
Papa, *he'd love* my rendition.

Me:
Who? Who would love—

Too late.

Lee (crooning, proudly, without shame or dignity):
🎶 *I pooed and peed in San Francisco…*
High on a hill, it calls to me… 🎶

(Someone drops a wine glass in shock. Bib keeps playing. Like a soldier. A very drunk soldier.)

🎶 *To be where little cable cars climb halfway to the stars…*
The morning fog may chill the air…
I don't care… 🎶

(He shrugs. He *doesn't* care. He pooped on that hill.)

🎶 *My love waits there in San Francisco…*
Above the blue and windy sea… 🎶

(Audience gripping their armrests. Mothers shielding children. Old jazz critics scribbling "GENIUS??" with aggressive punctuation.)

🎶 *When I pooed and peed in San Francisco…*
Your golden sun will shine for meeeee… 🎶

Final note: held. Vibrato so rich you could pour it over pancakes.
Lee throws both paws in the air. Tail wag syncs with the final drum hit.
Silence.

Then—

CROWD: bananas.
Chairs flying.
Someone screams "*HE'S SAYING WHAT WE'RE ALL AFRAID TO SING!*"
A nun faints.
The mayor weeps openly into a flag.

Me (crushed by applause, hand over face):
You embarrassed the entire legacy of Tony Bennett.

Lee (lighting an invisible cigar):
I *elevated* it, Papa.
With *authenticity.*

Bib Merrill (packing up):
I played with Coltrane.
But this…
this is *legend*.

(Scene: Post-pooed-and-peed ovation still echoing off the chandeliers. Bib Merrill's got tears in his piano. The quartet's exhausted but alive. Crowd begging for more. And me—me, I'm crouching at stage left, holding a tiny velvet pouch like it contains the Crown Jewels of Jazz.)

Me (tentative):
I brought your tiny tap shoes.
But—you don't *have* to if you don't want—

Lee (goes instantly belly up, paws in the air, full submission like a soldier reporting for glory):
Put them on, Papa!

Cut to:

Four tiny tap shoes strapped onto four furry paws.
The light hits them—sparkles.
The drummer chokes on his own drumstick.

Lee (pops upright like Fred Astaire possessed a dachshund and took one last chance):

🎶 *I won't dance, don't ask me…*
I won't dance, don't ask me…
I won't dance, madame, with you… 🎶

(He *is dancing*. Oh, how he is dancing. Paws tapping like typewriters in a 1930s newsroom. He's got rhythm, he's got jazz, he's got *vengeance*.)

🎶 *My heart won't let my feet do things that they should do…* 🎶

(Irony level: peak. Feet doing EVERYTHING. Tap-tap-tap-kick-ball-change-shimmy.

Audience: screaming.
One woman faints and wakes up speaking fluent Astaire.
A child throws his iPad into the sea and swears to live analog from now on.
Bib Merrill says "fuck it" and joins with a full-blown stride piano solo, resurrects ragtime on the spot.)

Lee (tapping harder, faster, impossibly more):
🎶 *You know what? I won't dance…*
Unless you…
Give me the beat, and move your feet…
And bring me another treat… 🎶

(That last line? Improvised. The crowd? Loses their damn minds.)

Me (clapping, speechless):
Where did you learn to—

Lee (still tapping):
Gene Kelly. Dream sequence. Last week.
You were asleep. I was *watching*.

🎶 *Tappity tap tap, don't ask me why…*
I won't dance, but I'm gonna fly… 🎶

And boy, did he.
Paws in the air.
Tiny shoes blazing.
And jazz, weeping with joy.

(Curtain lifts. Smoke curls like sorrow made visible. The band hushes down to a whisper. Bib Merrill cracks every knuckle like he's about to perform surgery on the human soul. A single ribbon mic descends, stopping precisely at dog height, as if summoned by destiny—or heartbreak.)

Lee (to me, quietly, eyes glassy):
Papa…
Let's make 'em cry.

Me (barely breathing):
Go get 'em, kid.

Lee (steps into the light, paws planted, chest open like a chapel):

🎶 *Youuuuuuu ain't never been bluuuuue…*
No, no, nooooo…
You ain't never been blue…
Till you've had that mood indigo… 🎶

(The string bass moans in agreement. The trumpet lets out one long note like a sigh that's been waiting years to be exhaled.)

🎶 *That feelin' goes stealin' down to my shoes…*
While I just sit here and sigh…
Go 'long, blues… 🎶

The floor: instantly ankle-deep in tears.
Ushers: tossing lifebuoys from the gallery.
A man on Row C: screaming "LET HIM HURT ME AGAIN."

Someone else: tries to marry a stranger. The emotion's just *too* much.

Lee (not even blinking, not even wiping away the tears pooling on the mic):

🎶 *And in the evenin' when the lights are low…*
I'm so lonely I could cry…
'Cause there's nobody who cares about me…
I'm just a poor fool that's bluer than blue can be…
🎶

(Silence. Devastating silence. A silence that *caresses the bruise* instead of the wound.)

Then: one sob. Then another. Then the sound of an entire audience coming apart like a wet cake.

Me (watching from the wings, whispering like it's church):
Lee… you magnificent bastard.

Lee (turns head slightly, tears hanging on whiskers, whispers back):
That's *Mood Indigo*, baby.

Bib Merrill (softly, reverently, broken):
We don't *deserve* him.

And for one perfect moment, the world was sad…
but *beautiful*.

(Scene: The flood of tears has barely receded. People are wringing out their tuxedos. Someone in the front row is still softly sobbing into a monogrammed napkin. Bib Merrill's hands hover over the keys like he's afraid to touch joy again.)

Lee (wiping his brow with a monogrammed paw towel):
Let's *cheer 'em up*, Papa.

Me (wary, dripping, moved beyond recognition):
You sure they're ready?

Lee (turns to the band, tail wagging like a swing metronome):
Let's do that one the Gershwin brothers wrote for Fred Astaire.
And… *slap that bass!*

(The bassist SLAPS. The snare *snaps*. The piano *grins*. And Lee, without missing a beat, *slaps* the ribbon mic with the back of his paw like he's settling a jazz score.)

🎶 *They all laughed at Christopher Columbus*
When he said the world was round…
They all laughed when Edison recorded sound… 🎶

(Lee taps the mic in tempo, Tony Bennett-style, sharp and cool like a jazz woodpecker with purpose.)

🎶 *They all laughed at Wilbur and his brother*
When they said that man could fly…
They told Marconi, wireless was a phony…
It's the same old cry… 🎶

(The audience: leaning forward. Eyebrows lifted. Tissues lowered. Jazz has come to *resurrect* them.)

🎶 *They laughed at me wanting you…*
Said I was reaching for the moon…
But oh, oh, oh, you came through…
Now they'll have to change their tune… 🎶

(Lee starts dancing. Light on his paws. Fred Astaire with toe beans. A spin. A shuffle. A tail flourish.)

🎶 *They all said we never could be happy…*
They laughed at us and how…
But ho, ho, ho, who's got the last laugh?
Hee, hee, hee, hee, let's at the past laugh…
Ha, ha, ha, who's got the last laugh now? 🎶

Audience: dancing in the aisles.
A jazz funeral becomes a wedding.
One couple files for spontaneous marriage.
The Pope claps. (Don't ask why he's there. He's wearing Converse.)
The cat is *snapping*. With *rhythm*.

Me (yelling over the joy):
Lee! You just turned heartbreak into showbiz!

Lee (paws still moving, voice over the final chord):
That's jazz, Papa.
We *hurt*,

we *cry*,
and then—
we *swing*.

Me (grinning, stepping beside him):
What's that, Lee?
What do we do?

Lee (slow blink, suspicious):
We swing.

Me (leaning in, the classic wink):
And *why* do we do that?

Lee (eyes narrow… then the tiniest smirk):
I see what you're doing.

(He turns to the band. They *already know*. Bib nods. The drummer taps in. The bass *growls*. The brass flares like sunrise over Harlem.)

Lee (grabs the mic like it's made of rhythm):
🎶 *Because…*
It don't mean a thing
If it ain't got that swing… 🎶

(Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo wah)
—the audience, in *perfect sync*.

Lee:
🎶 *It don't mean a thing*
All you got to do is sing… 🎶

(Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo wah)
—now the whole theatre, arms raised, waving like reeds in gospel wind.

🎶 *It makes no diff'rence*
If it's sweet or hot

Just give that rhythm
Ev'rything you got… 🎶

(The band goes nuclear. Clarinet solo breaks the laws of physics. The drummer is possessed. A trumpet blasts someone bald.)

🎶 *Oh, it don't mean a thing*
If it ain't got that swing… 🎶

(Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo wah)
(Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo waaaaahhhhh!)

Lee: paws out, ears flapping, jazz face *activated*.
The house: upside-down with joy.
Chandeliers shake.
People kiss strangers.
A child's first words are "doo wah."

The cat is dancing the Charleston.
Pope still vibing.

Me (clapping like a proud dad who just saw his kid out-sing Ella):
What *was* that?

Lee (tail wagging in 4/4):
Papa…
That's what *we* do.

Bib Merrill (in tears, again):
Swing eternal, mutt divine.

(Scene: The smoke hasn't even settled from the Gershwin blowout. The room smells of burnt applause and perfume. Someone's fainted in the balcony. Bib Merrill has ripped off his tie and tied it around his head like a war veteran of swing. The audience is begging for mercy. Jazz mercy. Which, of course, never comes.)

Me (stepping into the silence, half-daring):
Well… after the Duke, give 'em some *Cole.*

Lee (adjusting tap shoes like a sniper chambers a round):
Well… whatever you say.
These days…

(He scrapes the floor once. Sharpens the metal like a chef would a knife.
The band sees the look. The Cole Porter look.
They tense like tigers behind their instruments.
Lights drop—then snap white hot.)

Lee (explodes into mic):
🎶 *ANYTHING GOES!* 🎶

Bib Merrill, laughing like a man on fire, hammers in with the band.
The brass hits like a slap. The bass is on cocaine.
The drums are committing crimes.
And Lee—Lee *attacks* the tap floor like a tommy gun in a speakeasy shootout.

🎶 *Good authors too who once knew better words,*
Now only use four letter words
Writing prose—
🎶 *ANYTHING GOES!* 🎶

(Tap. Tappity. TapapapapaTAP.
Floorboards scream.
The ghost of Gregory Hines pokes his head out of the rafters and gives a solemn nod.)

🎶 *The world has gone mad today,*
And good's bad today,
And black's white today,
And day's night today,
When most guys today
That women prize today
Are just silly gigolos… 🎶

SUPER TAPPATAPPATAPPATAPAPAPA.
(The stage begins to *smoke*. Literally. A small fire breaks out under Lee's left shoe. The janitor refuses to intervene out of sheer respect.)

🎶 *And though I'm not a great romancer,*
I know that you're bound to answer…
When I propooooooose… 🎶

(Final tap roll. Paw in the air. Mic lifted like a gladiator's sword. Then—)

🎶 *ANYTHING··· GOOOOOOOOOOOES!* 🎶

Audience: detonated.
Tables flipped.
People scream, cry, propose, combust.
A 97-year-old woman crowd surfs.
The mayor signs an executive order renaming the city *Anything Goes-ville*.
A pianist in the wings vomits from emotion.

Me (barely holding it together):
Lee··· what *was* that?

Lee (panting, steaming, proud):
That, Papa··· was *Cole* bloody *Porter*.

Bib Merrill (pouring bourbon on his hands to cool them):

He's not a dog.
He's the *Second Coming of Swing.*

(Scene: Dressing room chaos. Tap shoes everywhere. Lee's fur slightly matted with stage glitter. Bib Merrill curled under the makeup table softly muttering "swing... swing…" in his sleep. A phone rings. Shrill. Brazen. It demands attention.)

Lee (calmly, casually, impossibly):
Pulls iPhone from fur.

Me (jumps like I've seen a ghost chewing a charger):
What the—Lee?! Since when do you have a *phone*?

Lee (presses a paw to his lips):
Shush, Papa. This is important.

Me (aghast):
Did you just *shush* me?

(turns to Wife)
Since *when* does he have a phone?!

Wife (sipping wine straight from bottle):
I have less of a clue than I have patience right now.

Me:
Lee… did you *steal* that?

Lee (offended):
I *bought* it.

Me:
Bought it?! With *what* money?!

Lee (as if I've asked why the sun shines):
Revenues… from *the book.*

Me:
What *book?*

Lee:
The one *you* wrote. About me.
About us.

Me:
Lee, that was just—writing. For *us*. For *the family*.

Lee:
Penguin bought it.
Life Magazine ran a feature.
Netflix picked it up.
They're filming the series as we speak.

Me (spinning):
Filming where?! Are we being filmed *now?!*

Lee:
Papa.
Just… let me *hear*.
Someone wants to join the show…

(Suddenly—spotlight flashes across the opposite wing. A glamorous silhouette steps into view. Tap shoes sparkle. Sequin-drenched, radiant, iconic. It's—)

Sutton Foster.
Full *Anything Goes* Broadway regalia. White gloves. Rhinestone sailor hat. Legs that have tap-danced through time itself.

She waves with a grin, eyes bright. Mouths—
"Surpriiiiiise!"

Through Lee's phone speaker: same voice, in stereo.
"Surpriiiiiise!"

Me (looking between phone, stage, wife, then collapsing into chair):
This is…
not how I thought retirement would go.

Wife (texting Oprah):
Ask if she wants a cameo as the cat.

Lee (paw over receiver):
She's opening Act II with me. Duet.
She plays *Hope*, the Broadway ingénue who teaches the bitter jazz dog to love again.
Also… she brought her own tap coach.

Me:
Lee… what *is* this show?

Lee (smiling like Sinatra with a secret):
It's *our* life, Papa.
Just with better lighting.

(Band kicks in. Sutton's already tapping into her opening number. Lee adjusts his bowtie. A second mic drops from the ceiling. Curtain rising again.)

Lee (to me, over shoulder):
Act II, baby.
Anything.

Freaking.
Goes.

(Scene: The dressing room has been evacuated. The entire theatre is now under siege by Broadway. Stagehands move like caffeinated phantoms—ropes fly, pulleys shriek, backdrops whoosh down and up like war banners. A steamy Manhattan skyline dissolves into the sleek railings of a 1930s cruise liner. Nautical props roll in. A goddamn *lifeboat* swings by. Spotlights dance across waves of navy and gold.)

Me (staring wide-eyed):
What the—?

Wife (clutching chest):
When… he…
Sutton Foster…
Broadway…

Me (shaking head slowly):
Just… don't ask anymore.

Orchestra: now a *full* swing machine. Violins, brass, woodwinds, timpani, two vibraphones, and a harpist who's definitely weeping. The conductor looks like he just snorted Gershwin off a tap shoe.

A dozen tap dancers burst in—full sailor regalia, white suits, joyful mayhem. They attack the stage with their feet like jazz assassins. The deck of the cruise ship *trembles*.

Top stage:

Lee.
In white tuxedo jacket.
Bowtie.
Little sailor cap.
Sutton Foster beside him.
They look at each other.

They *nod*.
The orchestra *blasts*.

🎶 *When every night*
The set that's smart
Is intruding in nudist parties in studios…
🎶
Lee (grinning):
🎶 *Anything Goooooooooooes!* 🎶

Then: all hell breaks loose.
A pure, unfiltered, gin-soaked *Cole Porter*
Broadway frenzy.
Every dancer tapping like the rent's due and their soul is jazz.
The set is spinning.
People are fainting in time to the beat.
Champagne corks pop from the wings.
Even the orchestra pit is dancing.

And in the center—leading the line—Sutton and Lee.
Perfect harmony.
Jazz in motion.
Four paws. Two legs. One legend.

Sutton (singing, arm in Lee's):
🎶 *And though I'm not a great romancer…* 🎶

Lee (dancing like heaven has swing flooring):
🎶 *And though I'm not a great romancer…* 🎶

Both (eyes locked):
🎶 *I know that you're bound to answer…*
When I propose…
Anything goes…
Anything GOOOOOO-EEEEEEEEES! 🎶

Final note hits.
Stage explodes in white confetti.
Tap shoes melting from friction.
The entire orchestra collapses in a heap of sweat and applause.
One dancer is carried off on a stretcher—smiling.
Bib Merrill reappears, shirtless, screaming "*YES!*" into a trumpet.

Me (to Wife, calmly):
He's... headlining Broadway now.

Wife (eyes full of tears):
And I packed him kibble and a poop bag this morning.

Me:
America, baby.

Lee (bowing, breathless, jazzed):
That's *how* you finish Act II.

Sutton (to audience, triumphant):
And we *haven't even started* Act III.

CURTAIN.
Not a fall.
A *detonation*.

Audience:
(Bananas)².
Screaming.
Sobbing.
Throwing chairs into the air like graduation hats.
One man gives birth on the mezzanine.
The cat is conducting the encore with a baton made of existential disbelief.

Suddenly—Netflix executive.
Suit. Tie. Sweat.
Slides in like a Wall Street penguin on jazz butter.
Hands me a check so engorged with zeroes it has an *appendix check* attached by *staple*.
The memo line reads:

> "For the rights to Reality™"

He doesn't stop.
Barrels straight toward Lee.
Out comes a leather folio.
A pen appears.
Lee signs with a pawtograph.
Dot. Swirl. Tail-flick flourish.
Deal done.
Netflix bows.

Sutton Foster—Broadway royalty, multiple Tonys, three layers of eyelash glitter—now openly *frenching* Lee.

Lee, fully engaged, full tongue, paw around her waist like a gentleman who knows how to lead.

Me:
Reality is… no more.

Suddenly—fog.
Music.
Footsteps.
Spotlight—dim, amber, holy.

Onto the stage stroll:

George & Ira Gershwin.
Irving Berlin.
Duke Ellington.
Cole Porter.

Impeccably dressed.
Champagne in one hand.
A warm, glowing grin on each face.

They walk straight to us.
One by one, they kiss us—both cheeks.
Cole Porter adjusts my collar.
Ellington straightens my hat.
Berlin whispers, "*About time.*"
Gershwin hands Lee a vintage saxophone with diamonds in the bell and says:

> "Take care of this. It knows pain."

Stagehand (overwhelmed, wiping tears with a top hat):
Lee! Sutton!
Get a *room!*

Lee (breaks kiss, winks):
Make it a suite.

And in the distance, the stars re-align.
Reality bows and exits, quietly.
Jazz takes over.
Forever.

- SOME TIME LATER -

[60 Minutes Theme Music – solemn, portentous, like morality in a tuxedo]

Cut to:
Camera pans across an opulent study.
Bookshelves so tall they require a butler with a rope-and-pulley system.
Leather-bound volumes gleam like old scotch.
And —*is that a Gutenberg Bible?*
Yes. Yes, it is.
Just tucked between *Lolita* and *Finnegans Wake*,
like it's no big deal.

Me (ignoring the camera, swirling a glass with Cognac that pre-dates the birth of Napoleon. Fingers casually brushing an original, typewritten *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, complete with Hemingway's pencil notes in the margin):
Revenues?
Oh… just to *cultural projects*.
(pats manuscript lovingly, the way one might pet a mythical beast)
You know… *art*.

Journalist (visibly losing structural integrity):
You personally *funded* the rebuilding of the Globe Theatre… *on the Moon*?

Me (barely glancing up):
Well… we *needed a venue* for the lunar Sondheim revival.

Cut to: white sand. Crystal water. Slow jazz cover of "La donna è mobile" plays softly on a steelpan and upright bass.

Lee and Sutton—hand in paw.
Matching sunglasses.
Mai Thais.
Golden hour.
Gorgeous.
Unholy.
Unstoppable.

Sutton (to camera, smiling like she invented love):
People said it wouldn't work.
I said: "*Anything Goes*."

Lee (tail curled around a straw):
Love… knows *no bounds*.
Even species.
Even taxonomies.

The camera zooms in dramatically as they clink glasses.

Lee (voice soft, profound):
Next season?
We debut *a jazz reinterpretation of Puccini's Gianni Schicchi*.
I'll be Schicchi.
She's Lauretta.
The aria?
A samba.

Sutton:
He taps.
I trill.
Then we steal a will and elope in 5/4 time.

Narrator (off-screen, as the sunset bleeds perfection):
When asked if success had changed them, they

responded only with a wink, a minor seventh chord, and a bark in B-flat.

[Cue 60 Minutes ticking clock, but syncopated… jazz style.]

Tick.
Tack-a-tick.
Ta-tick-tack.
Swing.

You thought it was just a dog book.

You read the first one, rolled your eyes, maybe cried a little when no one was looking. You said: “Cute. Sentimental. Just a mutt with a wag.”

Well guess what?

This mutt swings. And not just any swing—he sings THE. FUCKING. JAZZ. He croons like Sinatra possessed a rescue hound. He tap-dances through heartbreak with Broadway fire in his paws. He makes grown men weep into their crème brûlée and nuns faint into swing revival flashbacks.

This isn’t your Hallmark Channel dog. This is Lee. Velvet voice. Murderous vibrato. Tap shoes hot enough to burn through stageboard.

This is the story of a dog. But also the story of you, if you’ve ever loved so hard it made you ridiculous. If you’ve ever needed someone so much it turned into music. If you’ve ever looked at a dog and thought, “Goddamn it, if you sang, I’d never stop listening.”

This book will not comfort you. It will torch your irony, throttle your heart, and tap-dance your soul into the chandelier.

Come in. Lights down. Spotlight up. The dog’s about to sing.

Because it don’t mean a thing If it ain’t got that swing.